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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000316

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A
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SUBJECT: PAKTIKA PROVINCE: ISOLATION AND POOR SECURITY MAKE
GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT DIFFICULT

Classified By: ADCM Brent Hartley for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Paktika Province is widely perceived as an undeveloped and insecure Afghan hinterland. This perception is largely accurate, though centers of development and governance are emerging in key populated centers. The key challenge for Paktika is the near total absence of trained professionals in agriculture, health, law enforcement, management and education. Leaders including the Governor and the Chief of Police offer some hope for the future, but the lack of adequate support staff limits their effectiveness.

Governance

12. (SBU) Paktika includes large areas of undeveloped land that lack easy access to district centers. The isolation limits the reach of security forces and government-provided services. In three large communities, Khair Kot City, Orgun-E and Sharana, residents recognize GIROA authority and can receive multiple services from the district centers, including land registration, access to police services, and citizenship documentation. In the remaining twenty districts, the largely rural population is often separated from government services, including education and health care, or the services are so poor that they diminish the credibility of the provincial government. The government's influence is often limited to the area immediately surrounding the district centers.

13. (SBU) Governor Mohammad Akram Khpalwak is energetic and ambitious. He has been creative in his efforts to unite the province and gain credibility for the government. He travels frequently throughout the province and meets with local shuras and tribal leaders and is well versed in local politics. However, he lacks adequate professional support among his staff and often responds to complaints of ineptitude or corruption among his district administrators by transferring them among districts. Since personal relationships between shuras of village elders and local government leaders is key to acceptance of the government, the 62 different transfers effected by the Governor among the district administrators in the past year have been destabilizing. Two different Provincial Chiefs of Police (CoP) likewise ordered 38 transfers among the District CoPs over the past year.

14. (SBU) The lack of qualified personnel is Paktika's main challenge. Following the murder of four judges by

Anti-Coalition Militia (ACM) in early 2007, few attorneys, investigators or jurors accepted reassignment to Paktika. Only six of the 246 positions in the Attorney General's tashkil (approved personnel roster) are currently filled.

Development

15. (SBU) The prohibitive security situation in Paktika limits gains on the development front. An independent Afghan contractor recently completed an agricultural survey without incident, but most contractors hesitate to come to Paktika because of its reputation as a backwater with poor security. Over the past three years, international donors have made some progress. Most large villages now have at least one school and a clean well, and many now have access to solar power for street lights. Commerce is also flourishing, compared to past years, around a new network of paved and gravel roads linking the three major cities in Paktika with each other and with the ring road.

16. (SBU) There are other encouraging signs, including increased commerce in Sharana where a private/public partnership will result in a 300 percent expansion of the commercial bazaar. The PRT completed two large Centers for Educational Excellence in 2007 that will begin operations in 2008, one as a government-run madrassa, meant to replace several dozen unofficial madrassas, and the second as a teacher's college in Orgun-E. Some measures of public health also improved slightly over the past two years: basic health services are now available to 80 percent of the population, versus 30 percent in 2005, and DOTS coverage (areas implementing internationally accepted standards for tuberculosis control) has more than doubled to 66 percent.

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Unfortunately, when NGOs operating the provincial health network underperform, the provincial government appears unable to respond in a meaningful way to improve contractor performance or to remove the contractor altogether.

Security

17. (C) Over the past year, ACM increased the number of attacks in the province, resulting in a net increase of 17 percent in the number of significant actions against Coalition Forces (CF) and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). IED detonations increased by 56 percent over 2006 levels, with 137 total IED attacks in the province in 2007. Indirect fire incidents were likewise up by 52 percent over 2006 levels. The overall increase in attacks, with a total 606 incidents in 2007, suggests a shift in strategy that favors high visibility attacks intended to frighten civilians from joining or cooperating with ANSF or CF.

18. (SBU) General Mullah Khel, the provincial CoP, frequently visits districts within the province and is an able and persuasive public speaker. His ability to articulate the government's positions on security and governance is outstanding, but his ability to manage the forces under him is limited by the lack of educated or trained personnel. The dearth of trained management personnel likewise hinders progress on the security front as logistics breakdowns hinder efforts to equip and arm district police forces. Business and community leaders no longer report police pay or corruption as significant problems in the key population centers, though accusations of corruption or slow payment of salaries still occur in outlying and border regions.

WOOD